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ABSTRACT

The author discusses three recently established organizations now taking an interest in bilingual education: ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages); ATESL (Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language, part of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs); and TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). A paramount purpose of an educational system is to make it possible for its graduates to take a place in society, which presupposes their being able to control effectively the language of that society. The teaching of English to speakers of other languages, and dialects, becomes a central responsibility of the American educational system; schools must be aware of the language or dialect background of their students and make it possible for them to acquire the standard language as quickly as possible. This calls for ESOL and bilingual education. A child coming to school must be taught the standard language if he is to have access to the general culture and economy. At the same time, he has a right to be taught in his own language all the time he is learning enough English to handle the rest of the curriculum. Some communities may wish to maintain their own cultures and language; others may wish for a new blend of cultures by paralleling TESOL with TXSOE (teaching other languages to speakers of English). (AMM)

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ESOL and Bilingual Education

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This paper was read at the annual meeting of the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, New Orleans, November 29, 1969.

It is an interesting characteristic of modern civilization that when we find a new problem, our first reaction is to set up a new institution to deal with it. But it is a sad characteristic of most organizations that, by the time they are actually set up, the original problem has changed. A clear example of this is given in the case of three recently established organizations which are now taking an interest in the field of bilingual education: ACTFL, ATESL, and TESOL.

The Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language was formed as a part of the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, in the period of the late fifties when American universities were increasingly involved in educating students from overseas. Another group interested in teaching English as a second language coalesced within the National Council of Teachers of English, but remained an orphan, with a membership almost identical to that of ATESL. The emphasis at that time was on teaching English either to foreign students or in foreign countries. But, in the early sixties, some eyes were turned closer to home. In 1964, Professor Harold Allen received a grant from the United States Office of Education to make a survey of the teaching of English to non-English Speakers in the United States. While his study showed that some work

had started, its general finding was the lack of recognition of the problem.

Also in 1964 was held the first of three conferences on the teaching of English to speakers of other languages. Sponsored by the Modern Language Association, the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, the National Council of Teachers of English, the Speech Association of America, with the assistance of the Center for Applied Linguistics, these annual conferences brought together the growing number of teachers concerned with the area; and in 1966, at the New York conference, a new national professional organization was born, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

A year later, in 1967, the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages was formed. Aiming to unite all concerned with language teaching, it included in its affiliates the two associations of teachers of English as a second language.

Thus, by 1968 there were three national associations interested in one way or another in the language problems of Americans whose native language is not English. Two of these organizations were particularly concerned with teaching them English; the third added those people who might be able to help them develop their own first language.

In the last couple of years however, we have seen a switch in direction, with growing popular and political interest in the possibility of bilingual schooling. The Bilingual Education Act has made money available to support activities in the area of bilingual education. One of the early problems that is being faced by those of us working in the field is to find a professional home, a place where we can meet our professional colleagues and attempt to develop the scholarship and the professional standards needed to make bilingual education more than a sop to minority voters.

One handicap in this has been, of course, the names chosen by existing organizations. ATESL has perhaps the most suitable name, with its notion of "English as a second language" but it is primarily concerned with foreign students in the United States. TESOL recognizes clearly in its title that there are other languages involved, but its title seems to leave out the possibility of teaching other languages or teaching in them. (When we set up our New Mexico affiliate of TESOL, we finally decided to use the title New Mexico Association for TESOL and Bilingual Education; ugly, no doubt but the only way to combine the two areas clearly.) And ACTFL is clearly no better with "foreign language" in its title.

Now, all this may well be dismissed as being simply a matter of organizations and institutions. But I think there is a much more important aspect, for these organizations and their titles represent the way in which the problem has tended to be stated. Basically, they reflect the fact that we language teachers think of our task as teaching language rather than teaching students to use languages. Our goal has been stated linguistically rather than sociolinguistically: we have aimed at knowledge of a language rather than ability to use a language. I suggest that we try taking the wider view, and ask how language learning fits into the general curriculum.

There can be many views of the purpose of an educational system but it is clear that paramount must be making it possible for its graduates to take a place in society. One key feature of this is being able to control effectively the language of that society. Now, the society in which people live today is not a single entity. We all live in a great number of worlds: the world of our home, of our neighborhood, of our church group, of our occupations, of the culture that interests us. And it is generally the case that each of these worlds or societies has a language of its own.

Given for example the rapid expansion of scientific knowledge, it is clear that whatever other language requirements an individual may have, if he wishes to keep up to date with modern physics, then he must have good control of one of the world's major languages. Again, a child living in a New Mexican pueblo, if he is to participate in the cultural and religious life of the Kiva, must be able to use the language of his people. There are indeed people who live in a true monolingual situation and can attain complete self-realization in that language. Someone born in middle class suburban America who plans to remain for the rest of his life in that community, who manages to avoid symbolic foreign language requirements at universities, who plans to travel as a tourist without understanding the cultures he is visiting, and who is satisfied with the culture provided by the television box and the newspaper, will no doubt be able to conduct his whole life in one language. It is also clear that the advantages he will have from life are denied to all who do not from the beginning master middle class American English. To the extent that we believe that all people should have the opportunity of living such a life, the teaching of English to speakers of other languages becomes a central responsibility of the American educational system. And not just to speakers of other languages, but

also as is becoming increasingly clear, to speakers of other dialects.

This is not the time to enter into the question of the fundamental advantages or disadvantages of non-standard dialects; we simply have to recognize the fact that middle class American culture assumes that its members will speak the standard language, and penalizes in various ways those that do not. One of the first tasks of the educational system is to make it possible to overcome this disadvantage. This means that any American school must be aware of the language or dialect background of its students, and must make it possible for them to acquire the standard language as quickly as possible. There is good evidence to suggest that during this acquisition period other learning can take place in the child's first language. There is good reason to believe for example that it is a wise strategy to teach a Spanish-speaking child to read in Spanish while he is busy acquiring English. This type of strategy leads to the sort of educational structure that William Mackey, in his magnificent typology, would classify as dual-medium bilingual education, aiming at acculturation, and working to transfer the students to the standard language gradually but as soon as possible.

But all this assumes that everyone wishes, and should wish to belong to the single monolithic English-speaking culture. This melting-pot hypothesis has now happily been replaced by an acceptance of cultural pluralism. There is reason to believe that cultural pluralism depends to a large extent on the maintenance of linguistic pluralism. In this case, the languages of the minorities must be recognized not just as something to be used during the transition period, but as an integral part of the school curriculum.

But exactly what this part should be is still a matter for investigation. There are two basic strategies: to decide that each of the two languages concerned should have equal status throughout the curriculum, or to give them different status. The poorer strategy might well be considered in those cases where one is dealing with two languages each of which has a standard literature and each of which provides access to all aspects of culture, commerce, and science, e.g. French, English, Spanish. In the U.S., this model has been proposed as the ideal by Gaarder (and by other FL teachers), and its implementation is the goal for the Dade County experiment. It has a number of special qualities. It assumes entry to the school system by two sets of students, each controlling a different language. During

the initial period, ESOL for the speakers of the X language is paralleled by XSOL for the speakers of English. The natural advantage that speakers of English would have over speakers of X is thus taken away: all students need to spend a large portion of their time acquiring a second language. The curricular cost is clearly large: the time spent on the second language is not available for other activities, but the presumed reward is a generation of educated bilinguals, equally at ease in two languages and cultures.

The second strategy is to regard the X language as a limited culture-carrying medium, and treat English as the main language of instruction. In this approach, the X language speakers use their own language for learning about their own culture. In the first grades, X is used in the transfer classes, as a medium for concept development, and for learning to read. But even when ESOL has served its purposes and the student can carry on with the main part of the curriculum in English, the X language remains the medium for cultural studies. In this model, then, we might have Spanish-speaking children, learning to read in Spanish while learning ESOL: when they move to a regular curriculum in English, they will still take a subject called Hispanic studies, taught in Spanish. It must be noted that this

strategy is in fact one that maintains culture at the cost of maintaining isolation: the X speakers are the only ones capable of learning in the X language. This can presumably be overcome at the cost of having English-speaking children learn X. But note that we are then left with a monolithic (melting-pot) bilingual community, rather than two separate communities. The real difficulties of this become clear when we consider a school with English and several X languages: if it is decided that all students must learn all the languages, there will be little time for anything else.

What I have been saying about X languages also provides a model for dealing with X dialects. To the extent that these are non-standard, they will still need recognition as a viable medium during the ESOD phase. The same possibility of maintenance for cultural purposes is presumably available, but unlikely to be chosen simply because the non-standard dialect is generally not regarded as a valuable culture transmitter.

The American situation then calls for ESOL and bilingual education. A child coming to school must be taught the standard language if he is to have access to the general culture and economy. At the same time, he has a right to be taught in his own language all the time that he is learning enough English to handle the rest of the curriculum. Communities

that wish then to maintain their own cultures and language may then ask for this, recognizing the values and costs: separateness, and less time for "marketable" education. Communities that wish for a new blend of cultures may ask for this by paralleling TESOL with TXSOE.